

Family Planning in Washington Community Services Offices:

Challenges and Strategies

EXCERPTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Family planning is a critical component of programs designed to help welfare clients become self-sufficient and potential clients maintain self-sufficiency. Washington mandates family planning assistance and information for all Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) clients and potential clients (RCW 74.12.400 and 410).

This qualitative study presents the observations of 62 persons actively involved in CSO-based family planning services from five Washington CSOs (Ballard, Friday Harbor, Kelso, Port Townsend, and Spokane North).

CRITICAL FACTORS FOR INTEGRATING FAMILY PLANNING INTO CSOS

Based on the data collected in this study, the following elements are essential for integrating family planning services into CSO activities and the community:

- **Leadership from CSO administrators and supervisory staff**
- **The skills, personality, and presence of the family planning worker and contracted family planning nurse**
- **Teamwork and communication between CSO family planning staff and contracted family planning nurse and between family planning workers and CSO staff and administration**
- **Respect for clients as individuals and for their decisions and concerns**
- **Flexibility in program structure and activities**

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR CSO-BASED FAMILY PLANNING

While respondents from the five sites felt that family planning is becoming integrated into their CSOs and their communities, they also suggested ways to improve the program:

- **State and CSO administrators should increase the priority of family planning services, with greater support and more leadership.**
- **Dedicated family planning staff in the CSO should be maintained, with clinical services provided by contracted family planning nurses available at all CSOs.**
- **Measurable objectives should be developed to help motivate CSO personnel in promoting family planning and integrating these services into CSO activities.**
- **Client outreach should be expanded to reach CSO clients or potential clients before an unintended pregnancy occurs.**

Family planning programs flourish where administrators at the CSO level, and at state and regional levels, are willing to take a stand and move forward with a family planning agenda. Societal acceptance of family planning remains a challenge. Broader support at all levels will empower family planning personnel to increase their successful activities, such as training and teambuilding with CSO staff, community education and networking, and family planning outreach to vulnerable populations.

CONCLUSIONS. Well-integrated CSO-based family planning services are vital to assist clients in becoming self-sufficient and potential clients in maintaining self-sufficiency. While CSOs have made great strides in achieving this goal, future success depends on continuing leadership from managers and administrators and the dedicated and insightful work of family planning staff.